



## *Connecticut Society for Respiratory Care*

Statement of Susan Albino

House Bill 6350

February 22, 2013

Sen. Harp, Rep. Walker and members of the committee:

I am Susan Albino, a Registered Respiratory Therapist who has practiced in Connecticut for 32 years in a number of settings. Currently, I practice at Danbury Hospital. I am the President of the Connecticut Society for Respiratory Care (CTSRC) and am representing the organization tonight. There are approximately 1800 licensed Respiratory Therapists in Connecticut.

We would like to offer brief comments on a specific area of the Department of Social Services' proposed budget as contained in House Bill 6350.

One of the major areas of our work is in treating sleep apnea. Sleep apnea is considered a serious medical condition that affects young and old alike. Complications may include:

- **High blood pressure or heart problems.** If you have obstructive sleep apnea, your risk of high blood pressure (hypertension) is greater than if you don't. The more severe your sleep apnea, the greater the risk of high blood pressure. However, obstructive sleep apnea increases the risk of stroke, regardless of whether or not you have high blood pressure. If there's underlying heart disease, these multiple episodes of low blood oxygen (hypoxia or hypoxemia) can lead to sudden death from a cardiac event. Studies also show that obstructive sleep apnea is associated with increased risk of atrial fibrillation, congestive heart failure and other vascular diseases.
- **Daytime fatigue.** The repeated awakenings associated with sleep apnea make normal, restorative sleep impossible. People with sleep apnea often experience severe daytime drowsiness, fatigue and irritability. Children and adolescents with sleep apnea may do poorly in school or have behavior problems.
- **Complications with medications and surgery.** Obstructive sleep apnea is also a concern with certain medications and general anesthesia. People with sleep apnea may be more likely to experience complications following major surgery because they're prone to breathing problems, especially when sedated and lying on their backs. Undiagnosed sleep apnea is especially risky in this situation.

- **Liver problems.** People with sleep apnea are more likely to have abnormal results on liver function tests, and their livers are more likely to show signs of scarring.
- **Sleep-deprived partners.** Loud snoring can keep those around you from getting good rest and eventually disrupt your relationships. It's not uncommon for a partner to go to another room, or even on another floor of the house, to be able to sleep. Many bed partners of people who snore are sleep-deprived as well.

People with sleep apnea may also complain of memory problems, morning headaches, mood swings or feelings of depression.. Children with untreated sleep apnea may be hyperactive and may be diagnosed with attention-deficit/hyperactivity disorder (ADHD).

We are concerned about the \$3.9 million reduction proposed in tightening the requirements for purchase of sleep apnea machines.

CTSRC believes Medicaid recipients who need access to sleep apnea machines should have them.

We understand the new structure will base the purchase guidelines on those that exist in the Medicare program. As you may know, Medicare does require co-pays by the beneficiary for these machines. We have discussed this issue with staff at the Office of Policy and Management, and our understanding is there will be no co-pays on Medicaid recipients.

We would urge the committee to exercise oversight as this new “tightening” takes place. Again, our major concern would be that a person who needs assistance with a sleep apnea machine not be denied it.

Thank you.